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ABSTRACT

In ongoing development of the Second Chance Teachers Program at an historically African-American university, Xavier University of Louisiana, several strategic adjustments to the realities of recruitment were found necessary to achieve enrollment targets. The program was originally conceived as a project to draw surplus military personnel into careers in elementary and secondary teaching while they earned a master's degree in professional education. Adaptation of the original program concept to fit individual student background and career goals in professional education, financial and personal support needs of participants, and limitations of organizational structure proved necessary. Effective adjustment to those factors resulted in successful implementation of the program. It was concluded that viable program development must include a sound original vision, willingness to adapt that vision to the empirical realities encountered in the field, and ongoing focus on the real needs of participants. (Contains eight references.) (Author/JB)

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SECOND CHANCE TEACHERS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN AN HISTORICALLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

A Paper

by

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SECOND CHANCE TEACHERS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN AN HISTORICALLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to describe the ongoing development of the United Negro College Fund/Ford Foundation funded Second Chance Teachers Program in an historically African-American University. Originally conceived as a project to draw surplused military personnel into careers in elementary/secondary teaching while earning a master's degree in professional education, several strategic adjustments to the realities of recruitment were found necessary to achieve enrollment targets.

Adaptation of the original program concept to individual student background and career goals in professional education, financial and personal support needs of participants and limitations of organizational structure proved necessary. Effective adjustment to those factors resulted in successful implementation of the program.

It was concluded that viable program development includes: (1) a sound original vision; (2) willingness to adapt that vision to the empirical realities encountered

in the field; and (3) ongoing focus on the real needs of participants.

SECOND CHANCE TEACHERS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN AN HISTORICALLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

With funding provided by the Ford Foundation, a number of Second Chance Teachers Programs were initiated by the United Negro College Fund in September, 1993. The basic goal in providing grant support through this effort to selected historically African-American institutions of higher learning was to recruit, train and place persons with military backgrounds in elementary/secondary school teaching. The relatively small numbers of African-Americans entering the teaching profession had been well documented (Garibaldi and Zimpher,1989). Each college/university selected for participation was therefore allowed rather broad discretion in determining how best to approach the task of recruiting individuals -- especially minorities -- possessing either uniformed or civilian military backgrounds. The result was a diverse group of projects connected by the common thread of their participants possessing prior military exposure.

The Original Vision

The Xavier University of Louisiana Graduate School was

one of nine institutions chosen to participate. In Louisiana, it had been determined that a decreasing pool of new teachers -- African-American as well as white -- was graduating and receiving initial certification and that of those a number were not entering the profession (Garibaldi, 1986). Recruiting, training and helping place persons with former military exposure could therefore help alleviate an incipient shortage of qualified educators. As originally conceived by the Graduate School Dean and a faculty member assigned to plan the Xavier Second Chance Teachers Program, a rather narrowly focused approach was taken. The project was visualized as operating with one local public school system and included the following elements:

- - Military personnel separating from active service would be targeted. Substantial downsizing of the post-Cold War armed forces was anticipated and viewed as a major factor likely to contribute to the success of the program.

- - The Xavier project was unique among the participating institutions in recruiting only persons already holding baccalaureate degrees from regionally accredited colleges or universities. The original intent was to help such individuals work toward securing public

school teacher licensure while earning a Master of Arts degree in professional education. Consequently, all requirements for regular admission to the Graduate School were applied (Second Chance Teachers Program Recruitment Brochure, 1994).

- - It was assumed that recruits would bring with them sufficient veterans' benefits to pay all tuition and other costs of participation.

- - It was hoped that the Louisiana State Department of Education would eventually approve some form of alternative teacher licensure for persons completing this program.

- - It was assumed that the cooperating local public school system would hire Second Chance Teachers Program participants on a temporary certificate year-to-year basis while they completed their master's degrees and licensure.

The initial concepts and assumptions cited above began encountering feasibility problems from the time of program startup. To complicate matters further, the Graduate School Dean who had been the primary author of the original pros-

pectus moved to another university and the faculty member who had served as co-planner was unable to assume the additional program management duties involved. Although the official starting date of the project was September 1, 1993 actual program startup was deferred because of a delay in receiving the initial funding check. By January-February, 1994, the new Graduate School Dean had been able to secure the necessary project staff and commence operations. The staff comprised a partial released-time Project Director -- who was also an Associate Professor and Program Director (Head) of a regular academic area in the Graduate School -- as well as a full-time Second Chance Teachers Program Recruiter and a half-time secretary.

By the Spring of 1994, therefore, the Graduate School had secured funding for a projected four-year effort to recruit persons with military backgrounds into graduate level training as elementary/secondary school educators. The project staff was in place and Year I (September 1, 1993-August 31, 1994) funding had been received with anticipated renewal for a total program life of four years.

However, certain incongruities became apparent between the project as originally conceived and the realities encountered by the staff. It was determined that significant adjustments would have to be made if the program were to be made viable in the New Orleans metropolitan area. Acting on the precepts of Total Quality Management (Deming, 1993) the Graduate School Dean, the Project Director and the Program

Recruiter therefore set out to develop the program incorporating the necessary modifications.

A Cold Hard Feasibility Review

The basic aim of this program was to secure the enrollment of a minimum of ten Second Chance graduate students during each of the four academic years of the grant, with special emphasis placed upon encouraging eligible African-Americans to participate. However, several factors not anticipated in initial planning became evident almost immediately:

- - Despite early intensive efforts expended by the Dean, Project Director and Program Recruiter, insufficient interest existed within local active service military establishments. This was probably due primarily to the relatively low salaries paid Louisiana teachers and to the extreme intricacy of Louisiana certification standards for public school service.

- - A number of eligible prospects were or had been members of various armed forces reserves. Some were already engaged in teaching careers and saw Second Chance as

an opportunity to advance their careers either through earning a master's degree or pursuing higher or additional certification.

- - Numbers of prospects were interested in securing an M.A. degree in professional education whether or not they intended to pursue a career in the local public schools. Some planned to enter service in non-public schools, which do not always require public school teacher certification. Others were interested in public school teaching elsewhere in the nation.

- - A substantial body of applicants desired graduate study in areas of professional education other than classroom teaching. Educational leadership (administration and supervision) and guidance counseling were two such areas requested frequently.

- - Almost none of the applicants had any veterans' benefits available. Either they had exhausted their funds or they were simply not eligible for a variety of reasons.

Taken together, the factors described above constituted a substantial challenge to successful implementation of this Second Chance Teachers Program. Fortunately, from the time the project staff was put in place, the Graduate School Dean and UNCF and Ford Foundation representatives made it clear that whatever program adjustments were necessary should be implemented to keep the basic thrust of the effort -- recruiting persons (especially minorities) with military backgrounds into the teaching profession -- viable. Based upon that charge, it was decided to adjust the project to the market realities in the ways described below.

Program Development

The program that finally emerged retained the essential focus of redirecting persons with military backgrounds into elementary/secondary school professional education. However, key accommodations were made to the realities encountered in recruitment. Taken together, these adjustments resulted in a successful effort geared to local conditions.

The overall goals of the program were found tenable. Recruiting, training and helping place former uniformed and civilian military personnel as elementary/secondary school educators held significant promise for increasing the effectiveness of schools. The systematic, disciplined and results-oriented mindset of most persons with military back-

grounds fit well with many of the organizational and role-model needs of today's schools.

However, appropriate adaptation of the original program concept proved necessary in three major areas: (1) individual student background and professional education career goals; (2) financial and personal support needs of participants; and (3) limitations of organizational structure. Each of these elements is discussed below:

(1) The need to adapt the program to individual student background and career goals became evident from the outset of recruitment. As indicated, a number of eligible persons were interested in pursuing graduate study in professional education but not necessarily in classroom teaching per se. Some were already engaged in teaching in either public or non-public schools and wished to advance their careers via Second Chance. Others had become accustomed to leadership roles through their military experience and desired graduate programs focusing on principalship and/or instructional supervision. Some saw guidance counseling as an attractive career option. For some, state public school licensure was essential while for others engaged in non-public school work it was optional. It

quickly became obvious that the initial vision of a narrowly focused program limited simply to a cooperative effort with one local public scool system to produce only classroom teachers did not meet the needs of many prospects. As a result, the term "teacher" was interpreted broadly (as in Louisiana law) to include training for educational roles not only in classroom teaching but in such areas of the profession as guidance counseling and school leadership (educational administration and supervision). Consequently, a variety of students have majored in a diversity of specializations, including elementary education, secondary education, educational leadership and guidance counseling.

It was also determined that in certain cases where public school teacher certification was not necessary for non-public school employment participants would be encouraged but not required to complete public school teacher licensure as a part of Second Chance. For example, under Louisiana standards for state approval of non-public schools the principal of a non-public school need not possess public school teacher certification but only a

master's degree from a regionally accredited college or university. This approach permitted certain participants to bypass burdensome undergraduate credit public school teacher certification requirements when they were not relevant to the individual's career goals.

In like manner, it was discovered that some applicants already had earned graduate degrees in various fields of study. They were not restricted to pursuing a second master's degree in education, but were permitted to enroll as post-master's degree students in appropriate areas of specialization.

(2) Financial and personal support needs became clear. As reported elsewhere, the financial burden of attending college -- especially graduate or professional school -- can be crushing for many African-Americans (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1990). The early assumption that Second Chance participants would bring substantial veterans' benefits with them upon separating from the active armed services proved overly simplistic in the local market. As indicated previously, little interest could be developed

locally in individuals exiting active military service. The main source of eligible persons proved to be reservists or veterans of some years standing. For the majority of such applicants, veterans' benefits were not available in the amounts required to pursue graduate study. Fortunately, the new Dean of the Graduate School secured some assistance in the form of tuition waivers for those without other means of participation. However, the need to secure ongoing financial assistance remains a signficant problem for the majority of our target population.

It was also discovered that expansion of the Second Chance Recruiter's functions to include personal assistance in such routine procedures as completing application processes and initiating periodic follow-up consultation with participants helped greatly in maintaining their interest in entering and completing their individual programs. Academic advisement remained the sole province of each student's Graduate School Program Director. However, the support services afforded by the Second

Chance Recruiter have proven invaluable to many participants.

(3) Limitations of organizational structure have required appropriate adaptation. As indicated previously, the initial concept of a narrowly focused project tied solely to one public school system did not prove feasible in the recruitment market targeted. Therefore, adjustments of majors and other relevant factors have had to be made with consideration of the individual participant's needs and situation outside the university. Participants faced a variety of employment circumstances. Some had not yet begun working in schools while others were well-established. Some had to meet unique needs of their particular employing schools and/or school systems. In order to make Second Chance relevant, the peculiar needs and limitations of employing institutions and their organizational structures have had to be faced honestly and dealt with in a positive manner.

Within the Graduate School, the governing

> policy that admission requirements for each area of specialization are set by the appropriate Program Director has resulted in some applicants not being accepted in their programs of first choice. In one area, the requirement of holding regular public school licensure prior to being admitted to a master's degree program has frustrated some wanting to major in that area but not intending to enter public school teaching.

In general, expanding the parameters of the program to encompass the real needs of prospective participants has been successful. This approach was consistent with the position taken by Barnard (1938) that the people served ("customers") are truly members of the organization and that their needs and desires must be accommodated. The charge -- given with the requisite authority -- to adapt the program to realities encountered in the field greatly facilitated the process of program development. Once established, the new program parameters proved both realistic and manageable.

Similarly, adjusting the program to the participants' needs for financial and personal support has been quite straightforward. Expansion of the Program Recruiter's role was a natural outgrowth of the interpersonal relationships established during recruitment and has strengthened the pro-

gram immeasurably. The ongoing search for funding to relieve students of the tuition burden involved in attending graduate school has been challenging. Only the provision of tuition waivers by the University when needed saved the program at its outset. However, this experience has served to reemphasize the folly of assuming the availability of such support at the outset of the project.

Once shorn of the initial miscalculation that this program could operate effectively as a limited collaborative effort with only one local public school system the project has been rather successful in adapting to the particular limitations of outside organizational structures. A notable exception has been the inability to secure any concessions from the State Department of Education concerning alternative certication requirements for Second Chance participants. In terms of the Graduate School's internal organizational structure, significant cooperation among faculty and administration has helped overcome a number of inherent barriers to effective program implementation. However, certain restrictions inherent in the nature of policy formulation within specializations have limited options for some participants.

The greatest degree of difficulty in adjusting Second Chance to the needs of its participants has occurred in dealing with inherent limitations imposed either by internal or external organizational structures and their attendant sometimes inflexible policies. Even the relatively minor

difficulties encountered provide rather stark evidence that schooling at all levels remains an essentially bureaucratic enterprise as described years ago by Callahan (1962). From his experience with Second Chance, it is clear to this presenter that more thought needs to be given to inflexible state teacher licensure procedures as well as to unnecessarily restrictive admission policies within particular programs and departments in institutions of higher learning. Failure to examine those factors seriously can only result in the teaching profession losing signficant numbers of mature prospects seeking a career shift into professional education but lacking the extensive specialized undergraduate preparation traditionally mandated.

Program Outcomes

With the implementation of the program adjustments described, this Second Chance Teachers Program has been able to initially approach and eventually exceed its recruitment goals. A variety of persons with military backgrounds has applied since the Spring of 1994. By the Fall Semester, 1994 -- only one-half year into actual program implementation -- nine students were participating. As of the Fall Semester, 1995 twenty-two students were enrolled. The great majority was African-American and a significant number was female. This success in attracting minority individuals with military exposure to the teaching profession has been

attributable to a number of factors: a strong recruitment effort; significant administrative commitment from both the Graduate School and the University; and -- most importantly -- willingness of the staff to face the realities encountered in terms of the real needs of prospective participants and to adapt the program parameters appropriately. A serious effort has been made to align the project's management approach and program development efforts with the essentially humanistic educational philosophy of the participating university. The importance of such alignment -- especially in dealing with minority cultures -- has been discussed at length elsewhere (Burnett, 1994).

Conclusions and Implications

Based upon the experience gained in implementing this program, it was concluded that viable program development includes the following elements:

(1) A sound original vision is essential. The following points should be considered:

- - Initial conceptualization of a program must include not only a reasonable vision but systematic analysis of the market viability of the proposed project within the parameters imposed.

- - Ongoing review of the market viability of the program must be maintained. This includes not only the availability of prospective participants but also the assurance of funding adequate to support all aspects of the project effectively.

- - Overly optimistic or unsubstantiated assumptions of the availability of necessary organizational, financial and human resources must be avoided if a truly feasible program is to result.

(2) Willingness to adapt the original vision to empirical realities encountered in the field must be present. Specifically:

- - Flexibility in defining program goals and roles is essential. Being capable of adapting parameters to emerging realities within the overall scope of the original vision is critical.

- - Remaining bound by non-viable aspects of the program concept is both unrealistic and counterproductive. However,

changes in program parameters must be undertaken with the consensus of all sponsors.

(3) Ongoing focus on the real needs of participants is crucial. The following elements are especially important:

- - The real needs of participants must be identified and reviewed continuously. In the final analysis the program must serve people -- not merely a vision or mission statement.

- - The backgrounds and goals of the persons targeted for service by the program are the true starting points in attempting to ensure program viabliity.

- - The financial and personal support needs of participants must not be overlooked.

- - Limitations of organizational stucture -- both internal and external to the host institution -- must be given due consideration.

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